

Home Circle.

HOW TO LOVE THE BIBLE.

BY MRS. MARGARET B. PEEKE.

A child once said to her mother, "I do not love Christ as you do, mamma. He seems way off to me, but you speak as if he were near you all the time."

"You have not lived long enough to need him, my child," said the mother; "some day you will love him just as I do, after you have known and proved him."

What was true of that child, is true of all young people—they have not yet had occasion to prove Christ's worth, hence cannot love him as ardently as if he had stood by them in time of sore need; but the time of need will surely come, and for this every intelligent soul should prepare.

I have seen young girls plod through the French grammar—conjugating verbs, regular, irregular and defective—the dull-est kind of study, without a murmur or complaint. Why was this? They were going abroad, and this became necessary to the full enjoyment of their journey. I have never seen a young person willing to undergo the slightest weariness in studying the Bible unless he had his heart touched by God's Spirit. Yet who of us that has not seen the young meet sorrow, sickness, misfortune and death?

As it is wise to prepare for a trip to foreign countries, by mastering a language that opens all doors, is understood in all countries, and can make every want understood, is it not equally wise to prepare for the great unknown land whither we are sure to go, by knowing all we can of its people, its laws, its Ruler, and its life? To do this we have but one Book to master—yet how many know but little of its contents, and read it from a sense of duty, if at all! It is better to read the Bible from this motive than not to read it at all; but the key that unlocks its greatest treasures is love for its Author, and love for his Word. Some say, "One cannot order his affections, and if he does not like a person or thing, there is no use to try and force himself to like it."

Love can be cultivated, as well as any other talent. There is no dislike so great it cannot be overcome by earnest effort; and love for the Bible grows more rapidly than for any other book. Read it from a sense of duty, if you will, just as you learn the tedious French verbs—but do it *regularly*, perseveringly, and intelligently. The task will soon become a delightful one. Never read it without a note-book and pencil. As fast as a new topic is touched, jot it down, with chapter and verse; when a new character is alluded to,

do the same. After finishing a certain book, write a summary of topics and characters contained in it, then proceed with the next in the same manner. As soon as the Bible is read in this manner, with the same thoroughness of intellect that would be needed to master Herbert Spencer or Carlyle, a love for it will begin to show itself, and this will increase daily. One-half hour spent thus with the Word of God every day will bring more delight than in any other way. As the mind at first reads with merely an ordinary interest, it soon begins to inquire, then follows God's workings, and at last is led to believe there is a God worth loving and serving revealed in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. The soul soon yields to the influences of the Spirit, and the harmony between God and man is restored. The Spirit is never so near a worldly soul as when it is reading the Word, and as a means of grace alone, it should be insisted on by parents and teachers.

There was a school for young ladies in New Jersey several years ago, where this truth found a perfect illustration. Every pupil was obliged to retire to her room with her Bible and spend half an hour alone with her heavenly Father and his revealed Word. It was a matter of conscience. There were girls there who had no interest whatever in religion, some who were avowed unbelievers when they entered the school, but the result was almost universally the same—all were converted, and became ardent lovers of the Bible. They merely read it as they wished, without even the incentive of mastering its contents. But suppose they had been expected to give at the end of a three years' course an intelligent review of principal topics, characters, and circumstances—would the subject not have been still more interesting?

We must have more Bible reading. We must have more Bible study. Young ladies and gentlemen must educate themselves to love it, if their parents and teachers have hitherto neglected it. This book repays a hundred fold all the time given to its study; and best of all, the knowledge thus obtained goes with the soul to the great beyond, wither every one must surely go.

When cares have settled upon us, and habits have become more fixed, it is a more difficult habit to acquire than any other, for the law of life is to crowd out the unseen by the seen, the imperishable by the perishable. Preaching has changed. In the olden times one sermon contained more Gospel texts than fifty of the present day. I do not say it was better so, but it all tends to make the Bible a

sealed book to the youth of the present. In those days a son or daughter did not think, of saying, "I don't feel like going to church to-day,"—but old and young all went and were obliged to hear long discourses full of Bible truths. It was not possible to shut the reiterated texts out, and once in a memory, they were there forever. Then came the good old habit of gathering the family together in the early evening to recite the catechism and Scriptures, when every one was proud and glad to know the most. All these customs have vanished, and in their stead we have short sermons, made interesting in order to attract hearers; we have parents who allow their children to go to church or stay at home, as they choose; we have teachers who do not know and love the Bible as they should, hence cannot win others to it; and, as a result, we have a generation of men and women, as ready to believe an avowed infidel if he can ridicule God's Word in a brilliant manner as to believe in the great facts of the universe, that have been proclaimed by angels, and the Son of God.

It is not better theories that we need so much as a better practice of Bible-reading—this will lead to love of the Bible, this to love of its Author, and all life will be adjusted as it should be.

WHAT A LITTLE GIRL DID.

A good many years ago, a little girl of twelve years was passing the old brick prison in the city of Chicago, on her way to school, when she saw a hand beckoning to her from a cell window, and heard a weary voice asking her to please bring him something to read.

For many weeks after that she went to the prison every Sunday, carrying the poor prisoner each time a book to read, from her father's library. At last, one day, she was called to his death-bed.

"Little girl," said he, "you have saved my soul; promise me that you will do all your life for the poor people in prison what you have done for me."

The little girl promised, and she has kept her promise. Linda Gilbert has been all her life the steadfast friend of the prisoner. She has established good libraries in many prisons, visited and helped hundreds of prisoners; and from the great number whom she has helped, six hundred are now, to her knowledge leading honest lives. Prisoners from all parts of the country know and love her name, and surely the God of prisoners must look upon her merciful work with interest.

And all this because a little girl heard and heeded the call to help a suffering soul.